

# Did Bush Err on Lithuania? 12 Say He Didn't

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DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., May 2 — Should President Bush have responded more critically or more aggressively to the Soviet crackdown in Lithuania?

Not in the view of a dozen Floridians — men and women, Republicans and Democrats, old and young — who came together to discuss the issue here in northern Florida, a traditionally Democratic region now moving toward the Republicans. The group was solidly supportive of Mr. Bush's decision not to

## A Florida panel likes the way the President acted on the Baltics.

impose sanctions on the Soviet Union after it began to choke off supplies of oil, natural gas and other commodities to the rebellious Lithuanians.

Every member of the group said in one way or another that the President was right to encourage the two sides to work things out peacefully. Not one called on Mr. Bush to recognize Lithuania as an independent country or to cancel his planned summit meeting with President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

"I care about Gorbachev," said Paul Crow, Daytona Beach's police chief. "I think that to me that's a lot more important than Lithuania."

### 'Got to Be Very Careful'

"If you push Gorbachev against the wall because of Lithuania," said Tom Staed, a Democrat-turned-Republican who is backing a Democrat in this year's race for Governor here, "you're liable to stop the whole openness in the Soviet Union or you're liable to have a huge confrontation. You've got to be

very careful to give him some room to maneuver. We've got potential for spreading peace, so this isn't a moment for taking a hard line."

"Lithuania is a tiny piece of the puzzle," said Locke Burt, an insurance man. "Lithuania is going to affect the Ukraine and Byelorussia and the Georgians. This is what Gorbachev has to worry about, his whole country just coming apart at the seams."

The group was chosen to provide a rough cross section, but it did not constitute a scientific sample. Three more-rigorous national opinion polls taken during the last month for news organizations, including The New York Times, have shown that about two-thirds of Americans approve of what the President has been doing on the issue. The findings of such polls, and views elicited from groups like the one here, mean that there is little pressure on Mr. Bush, a man who watches such things closely, to change the course of his policy.

Some members of the panel, but not a majority, said Lithuania had acted too precipitously.

### Lithuanians Should 'Cool It'

Among such critics was Bob Ryan, a former diplomat and official at the United Nations, who like many others in this area came here to retire. He said bluntly, "I think that somebody ought to get to the Lithuanians and tell them to cool it — which may be happening — because they can't acquire their independence without the support of the Soviets."

Carl Williams, a student at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, added that political independence made little sense for Lithuania if it could not function as an economically self-sufficient state. He doubted it could.

But Clay Henderson, a lawyer and Democratic county councilman, argued that the Lithuanians had acted cleverly "to get themselves on the table."

"If I were Lithuanian," Mr. Henderson continued, "I would be saying to myself, 'The rest of the Eastern bloc has crumbled, my country became part of the Eastern bloc because of the secret agreement between Stalin and Hitler, and it should never have happened. Everybody else has got his free-

dom, so why can't I have mine? To get it, we have to seize the moment, act boldly and force the world to deal with us.'"

Meeting in a conference room at The Daytona Beach News-Journal at the request of The New York Times, the 12 panelists expressed some qualms, despite their broad support for the President's course of action, about his capacity for national leadership.

"Some significant world events have taken place in the last year without the United States being a major player, with us really being on the sidelines looking in," Mr. Henderson said. "At some point, there is a concern that if we continue to watch things happen, we could find ourselves in trouble."

But he conceded that "I'm not sure what we can really do."

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